

THE  
CATHOLIC EPISTLE  
OF  
ST. JOHN.



# THE CATHOLIC EPISTLE

OF

## JOHN THE APOSTLE:

TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK TEXT OF LACHMANN,

WITH

NOTES CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY.

BY

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## THE CATHOLIC EPISTLE OF JOHN.

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THAT which was from the beginning, which we heard, which we saw with our eyes, which we looked upon, and our hands handled, in relation to the word of life; for life was manifested, and we saw and testify and announce to you the life eternal, which was with the Father, and hath been manifested to us—What we saw and heard we announce to you also, that ye may have communion with us; and our communion is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus the

Messiah: and we write these things to you that your joy may be fulfilled.

Now this is the message which we heard from him and announce to you, that God is light, and darkness in him there is none. If we say that we have communion with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light as he is himself in the light, we have communion with each other, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have not sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and merciful to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a deceiver, and his word is not in us.

\*My children, I write this to you, that ye

may not sin. Yet if any one have sinned, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus the Messiah, a merciful one. And he is a sacrifice for our sins ; and not for ours alone, but for *those of* the whole world also. And by this we know that we have known him, when we keep his commandments. He that sayeth, I have known him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a deceiver, and the truth is not in him. But he that keepeth his word, truly the love of God hath been perfected in him. By this we know that we are in him. He that sayeth he abideth in him, ought as he walked himself also to walk.

Beloved, I write not to you a new commandment, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye heard. On the other hand, I write to you a new com-



mandment, which is true in reference to him and in reference to you ; for darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. He that sayeth he is in the light, and hateth his brother, remaineth in darkness until now. He that loveth his brother remaineth in light, and no cause of stumbling is in him ; but he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because darkness hath blinded his eyes. I write to you, children, because your sins are forgiven through his name. I write to you, fathers, because ye have known that *word* which was from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because ye have overcome the evil one. I wrote to you, children, because ye have known the Father. I wrote to you, fathers, because ye have known that *word* which was from the beginning. I wrote to



you, young men, because ye are vigorous, and the word of God remaineth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one.

Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him ; for all that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eyes, and the pride of wealth, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and its desire ; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. Children, it is the last hour ; and as ye have heard that antichrist cometh, even now antichrists many have appeared ; whereby we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us ; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us ; but *this has happened* that none of them may appear to be of us. And ye have an inspiration

from the Holy One, and know every man. I have not written to you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no falsehood consisteth with the truth.

Who is the falsifier but he that denieth that Jesus is the Messiah? This is the anti-christ, who denieth the Father and the Son. No one who denieth the Son hath the Father. He that confesseth the Son hath the Father also. Let that *word* abide in you, which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise which he promised you, life eternal.

These things I have written to you, concerning those who are deceiving you. Now the inspiration which ye have received from him abideth in you; and ye have not need that any one teach you; but as the inspira-

tion itself teacheth you concerning all men, and is truthful, and is not falsehood, even as it hath taught you, remain in it. And now, children, abide in him, that when he is manifested, we may have confidence, and not be shamed by him at his appearance. If ye know that he is merciful, know that he who practiseth mercy is born of Him. \*Behold how great love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God, and we are so. Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Beloved, we are now children of God; and it has not yet been declared what we shall be. We know that when he is manifested, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, as he is pure.

Every one who committeth sin, transgresseth the law *of God*; for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested that he might remove sins; and sin in him does not exist. No one who abideth in him sinneth: no one who sinneth hath seen him or known him.

Children, let no one deceive you. He that exerciseth mercy is merciful, as he is merciful. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God committeth sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, for he hath been born of God.

By this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. No one who exerciseth not mercy is of God, nor he

that loveth not his brother. For this is the message which ye heard from the first, that we should love one another, not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore did he slay him? Because his works were evil and his brother's good. Wonder not, brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not, abideth in death. Every one who hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath life eternal abiding in him.

In this we have perceived love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives on behalf of the brethren. But whoever hath the world's riches, yet seeth his brother having need, and closeth his affections from him, how doth the love of God abide in him? Children, let us not

love in word or in tongue, but in deed and truth.

By this we know that we are of the truth, and assure our heart in his presence: for if the heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth every man. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have confidence in regard to God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things which are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus as Messiah, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in *Jesus*, and *Jesus* in him; and by this we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us.

\* Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try

the spirits whether they be of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this know the spirit of God. Every spirit which confesseth Jesus as Messiah come in flesh, is of God; and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus, is not of God. And this is the spirit of antichrist, of which ye hear that it cometh, and it is now in the world already. Ye are of God, children, and have overcome them; for stronger is that which is in you, than that which is in the world. They are of the world; therefore they speak of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God. He that knoweth God, heareth us. He that is not of God, heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth



not, hath not known God ; for God is love. In this is manifested the love of God towards us, that God sent his only Son into the world that we should have life through him. In this is love ; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son a sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. God no one hath ever seen. If we love one another, God abideth in us, and his love hath been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him, and he in us, because he hath given to us of his spirit ; and we have seen and bear testimony that the Father sent the Son *as* Saviour of the world. He who confesseth that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love which God hath towards us. God is love, and he that abideth in love, abideth in *God*, and *God*

abideth in him. In this love has been perfected in us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, that as he is, so are we in this world. Fear does not exist in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, for fear hath torment; and he that feareth hath not been perfected in love. We thus should love, because God first loved us. If any one say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a deceiver; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment we have from him, that he that loveth God love his brother also.

\*Every one who believeth that Jesus is the Messiah, is born of God; and every one who loveth the Father, loveth him also that hath been begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we

love God and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we should keep his commandments; and his commandments are not burthensome. For every *child* that is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory which overcometh the world, our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he who came in water and blood, Jesus the Messiah; not in water only, but in water and blood. And the spirit is a testimony, for the spirit is truth. For there are three that bear testimony, the spirit, and the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one. If we receive the testimony of man, the testimony of God is stronger; for this is the testimony of God, for he hath borne testimony concerning his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the testimony of God in himself: he that believ-

eth not the Son, hath made him a deceiver, for he hath not believed in the testimony which God hath testified concerning his Son. And this is the testimony, that God hath given to us life eternal, and this life is through his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son hath not life.

These things I have written to you, that ye may know that ye have life eternal, who believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence which we have in him, that whatever we ask according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he heareth us whatever we ask, we know that we are in possession of the requests which we have made from him. If any one see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he may ask, and *God* will give him life for those who sin not unto death. There is sin unto death: I do not say that he should

ask for it. Every act of iniquity is sin ; but there is sin not to death.

We know that no one who is born of God sinneth ; but he that is born of God keepeth himself, and the evil one toucheth him not. We know that we are of God, and *that* the whole world lieth in the evil one. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given to us understanding that we may know the true One, and we are in the true One, by his Son [Jesus the Messiah].

This is the true God, and life eternal. Children, keep yourselves from false divinities.

## NOTES.

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The pious and affectionate Epistle, or dissertation, which is now published in a new translation, is one of the most authentic remains of Christian antiquity, having by an unbroken succession of authors of the first centuries of Christianity, been attributed to that apostle of Christ who is by distinction named “the beloved disciple.” He was the author of the Gospel of St. John; and the many correspondences in phraseology and sentiment render it very probable that these treatises were written near each other. Of the scriptural critics, Whiston and Lardner have proved that the Gospel was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, which happened A.D. 70; and a pretty evident indication is afforded in the Epistle itself that its writing was previous to that catastrophe. This is the opinion of those sagacious and admirable theologians, Grotius, Hammond, Benson and Newcome. The question remaining, in what country these literary productions first saw the light, is answered by referring them to Ephesus, in Asia Minor, where it

is admitted the apostle resided for many years in the latter part of his life. The present translator places no confidence whatever in this opinion, which will be found to derive little authority from the oldest testimonies, to have absolutely no solid support from internal evidence, and, if correct, would attribute to our apostle a residence of nearly thirty years in his native country of Palestine, after his personal intercourse with Jesus, without making an effort for conveying to futurity a written account of what he had seen and heard. It is far more probable, surely, that St. John availed himself of his leisure in the very country in which Christ suffered in the flesh, when surrounded by the associations which these wonderful events would call up, to prepare his supplementary evangelical narrative. And little objection can be raised to the opinion that what is called the First Epistle was an address to the reader, accompanying or soon after following that most interesting and authentic Gospel. The present writer has been pleased to find the conclusions of Dr. George Benson on the place of writing the Epistle, generally confirmatory of his own previous supposition.

It cannot well be shewn that many internal indications exist that this Epistle was written in the midst of heathens, and for their especial use. The terminating clause has been produced in proof; but, as the exception proves the rule, this single mention of *τα εἰδωλα*, or false divinities, appears to argue that the substance of



the treatise must have had a very different class of persons in view. They seem to be the fellow-countrymen of St. John, and to have had an early acquaintance with the Christian religion, reaching even to its origin.

The resemblances of this Epistle to the language of our Lord, as described in the Gospel of St. John, are very striking. The two treatises mutually explain each other, to an extent far beyond the apprehension of most persons. I apprehend that some of the chief aberrations of the popular theology arise from a neglect of this comparison, and from the imperfect manner in which it is usually made. Nor are theologians who depart from the popular creed entirely free from a vicious theory in their interpretations. The eminent and sagacious Priestley appears to have applied an erroneous principle to the interpretation of the proem to St. John's Gospel, and the reveries of a later age to the explanation of allusions to false prophets in the Epistle.

Satisfied of an early date for the Gospel, A.D. 63, and for the Epistle a year or two later, before the breaking out of the final war in Palestine, I cannot but reject all the attempts to elucidate St. John's writings by a state of things which may have existed at the end of the first century and in the course of the second. The usual orthodox reason for the composition of St. John's Gospel is completely negatived by the fact, that some of the strongest refutations of the Trinitarian creed are to be found in this Gospel; and by the true theory of a Har-

mony which absolutely demonstrates that St. John wrote subsequently to the other Gospels, certainly intended *his* to be supplementary to *theirs*, and has mainly described the earlier part of our Lord's ministry, before the imprisonment of the Baptist. There is a very remarkable early tradition to this effect, which has been almost entirely neglected by modern Harmonists; and to that neglect may be ascribed the difficulty generally found in arranging the evangelical events, which, in the leading features, are otherwise beautiful and consistent.

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As the modern verses have been excluded from the preceding translation, in agreement with the ancient manuscripts, useful as that arrangement is found in our common copies of the New Testament, the reader is requested to open any one of these to benefit by the notes which here follow, chapter i. 1—4.

The Improved Version, first edited by Mr. Belsham and others, A.D. 1808, adopts a rendering of these verses proposed in Mr. Lindsey's Address to the Youth of the two Universities, p. 302. Now, though I believe no man living exceeds me in admiration of the two theologians just mentioned, yet as I deem truth more admirable still, I say without hesitation that the Greek language will not allow of the rendering there given; and it is strange that Mr. Lindsey, who always adhered to the

impersonal sense of the term *word* in the proem to St. John's Gospel, should have proposed, though with diffidence, the personal sense in the beginning of the Epistle. Dr. Whitby, in his Commentary, while an orthodox clergyman of the Church of England, takes the impersonal sense in the Epistle, though the prevalent meaning in the Gospel, which he lived to modify. See his "Last Thoughts."

Verse 4. The old English use of the word *of*, in the sense of, concerning or in relation to. The retention of that word has misled even learned men, who do not always refer to the original. The Greek word *περι* of course admits of no other sense than this, which the word *of* in our language seldom now conveys. This clearly proves that by the *word* or *word of life*, St. John does not mean the person of Christ, for that which was seen and handled was *in relation to* the word.

Verse 7. Every rational Christian will observe that the apostle assigned a practical condition of the efficacy of our Saviour's death, viz., walking in the light, or living in conformity to God's holy law.

Chap. ii. 2. I prefer the word *sacrifice* to propitiation, as being more intelligible to the English reader. That the original word, *λασμος*, admits of this translation, is evident from Ezek. xlv. 27, Lev. iv. 8, Numb. v. 8, in which places the same word is used by the LXX. See Schleusner's Lexicon both to the Old and New Testament. The same sense is conveyed, 1 John iv. 10.

Verse 7. The words in the second clause, according to the Common Version, “which we heard *from the beginning*,” are wanting in the Uncial Manuscripts, the Latin Vulgate, and the Coptic.

Verse 13. I have inserted the term *word* from chap. i. 2. But I am much inclined to think that *τον* may be used before a vowel for *το*, the neuter, and then the rendering would be, “*that which* was from the beginning,” as in the first line of the Epistle.

Verses 13, 14. The repetition here used is uncommon, but I think gives no proof of advanced age in the writer, according to the opinion of some. It should be observed, that there is no identity, only similarity, between the verses.

Verse 18. I do not hesitate to render the word *ωρα*, hour; and I quite accede to the opinion of Grotius, Hammond and Whitby, that the close of the Jewish dispensation is indicated, so that the time of writing this Epistle is determined. I have no idea at present that Antichrist, either here or in Matthew xxiv., can be connected with the Roman Catholic power. It denotes the false prophets or pretenders to Messiahship before that catastrophe arrived. They were of Jewish origin. “They went out from us.” See Benson.

Verse 19. In this sense of *παντα*, I follow Gilbert Wakefield.

Chap. iii. 16. The words, *of God*, in some of the copies of the Common Version, are a mischievous addi-

tion to the sense, and not found in any ancient manuscript or version.

Chap. iv. 1. Probably *each spirit*, instead of every spirit. It is of the spirit of truth and of error that the apostle is writing, as appears from verse 6.

Verse 2. "Is come in the flesh." The clause is commonly mistranslated, and has been misapplied, both by Unitarians and Trinitarians, to a sect of Gnostics which cannot be shewn to exist at the time St. John wrote this Epistle. He appears to assert a characteristic of the true Christ, that he appeared in this world in mean circumstances (and of course in a mortal body), in opposition to the false Christs, who appeared in pomp. Benson's translation is, Every spirit which confesses that Jesus, who came in the flesh, is the Christ, is of God. More exactly according to the order of the original,—Every spirit which confesses that Jesus is the Messiah come in flesh.

Chap. v. 1, 5, 10, 12, 13. A comparison of these verses proves that the Son of God and the Christ or Messiah denote the same person, and are used equivalently. This point is admirably argued and proved in Mr. Locke's Reasonableness of Christianity.

Verse 16. I suppose all must perceive the difficulty which this verse presents, increased greatly by our not transferring ourselves to the apostle's time. The "sin unto death" perhaps means the rejection of supernatural evidence when submitted to the senses, which our Lord himself declared would not be forgiven in that age or

the age to come. Here a person rejected the strongest proofs of divine interposition, so that he could not, while he remained in that state of mind, be converted to Christianity.

Verse 6. The *water and the blood* may be called the two termini of our Lord's ministry: at his baptism he entered upon that ministry which he terminated at his crucifixion. It is observable that on both these occasions the Divine Being gave supernatural attestation to his beloved Son. The *spirit* denotes the miraculous power which Christ exerted, and which, according to his promise, he conferred upon his disciples on the day of Pentecost. The reasoning contained in this paragraph is best explained by that master of philosophy, Sir Isaac Newton.\*

It will be my aim to subjoin to this little treatise, and indeed this forms a chief reason of its publication, in a form accessible to the English reader not much versed in divinity, a faithful digest of the evidence to shew that the text of the three heavenly witnesses finds no place in St. John's writings. This evidence must be sufficient to convince every candid mind that it is a corruption of apostolic simplicity, and should not have the slightest reliance placed upon it in the formation of Christian opinion. What a change will be made in the belief of all sensible Christians when this text is thrown out, as it ought to have been long since, from the common

\* Historical Account, p. 59.

copies of the New Testament! The great Reformer Luther died more than three centuries ago (1546), and knowingly rejected that text from his German version of the New Testament as an innovation. But his disciples soon became more orthodox than their master. He had not long been dead before they inserted it, upon little or no evidence, and in direct opposition to the wishes of their great leader.

Verse 20. Much criticism has been bestowed upon this text, and the advocates of the Deity of Christ even now are found in this country to rest upon it; such as Dr. J. Pye Smith and Dr. Wardlaw. I have repeatedly examined it, and attentively weighed the evidence of several particulars in relation to it. The result has been given in the translation of the Epistle, few attentive readers of which can, I think, believe the doctrine to be therein taught.

#### 1 JOHN v. 7, 8:

Verse 7. — [“in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.

Verse 8. And there are three that bear witness in earth,] the spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one.”

That the following statement of facts may receive from my readers all the attention and credence which they claim, I shall employ the language of that excellent theological critic, Bishop Marsh; and for some of the



subordinate arguments, I shall produce other respectable and sufficient vouchers.

Though every library in Europe has been searched for Greek MSS. containing the Catholic Epistles, there has only been *one* Greek MS. in which the passage has been found, and this solitary MS. (as will presently appear) has no pretension to be numbered among *ancient* Greek MSS. As all other Greek MSS. which are now extant are destitute of this passage, it is of less importance to know the precise number of those which have been quoted by *name*, especially as they do not constitute the whole number. They amount, however, to not less than 132.

The Greek Fathers have never quoted the passage, which they certainly would have done if it had existed in their MSS.

Now the MSS. which were used by Irenæus at Lyons and Clement at Alexandria, could not have been written later than the *second* century. The MSS. used by Origen could not have been written later than the *third* century. The MSS. used by the Greek Fathers who attended the Nicene Council, could not have been written later than the beginning of the *fourth* century. P. 325.

In this manner we may prove that the Greek MSS. in every century were destitute of the passage, till we come to the period when the oldest of our existing MSS. were written, i. e. about the 4th or 5th century.

Further, the passage is wanting not only in the MSS. of all other ancient versions besides the Latin; it is wanting also in the most ancient MSS. and the Latin Vulgate itself. The expression, manuscripts of all other ancient versions, is designedly used; for the passage has been inserted by the editors, in *printed editions* of the Syriac and Armenian versions, in opposition to the Syriac and Armenian MSS.

Latin MSS. which have not the passage in the text, are still preserved to the amount of more than 50. Some of these, indeed, have the passage in the margin, added by a later hand; but it is the reading of the text (and not of the margin) which constitutes the reading of the MS.

And as the oldest *Latin* MSS. were destitute of the passage, so it was never *quoted* by the Latin Fathers, whose works have come down to us during the first four centuries.

At the end of the fourth century, the celebrated Latin Father Augustine (Austin), who wrote *ten* treatises on the First Epistle of John, in all of which we seek in vain for the 7th verse of the vth chapter, was induced in his controversy with Maximilian to compose a gloss upon the 8th verse. Augustine gives it *professedly* as a gloss upon the 8th verse, and shews by his own reasoning that the 7th verse did not then exist. The high character of Augustine in the Latin Church soon gave celebrity to his gloss, and in a short time it was gene-

rally adopted. It appeared, indeed, under various forms, but it was still the *gloss of Augustine*, though variously modified. The gloss having obtained credit in the Latin Church, the possessors of *Latin MSS.* began to note it in the *margin* by the side of the 8th verse. Hence the oldest of these Latin MSS. which have the passage in the *margin*, have it in a different hand from that of the text. In later MSS. we find margin and text in the same hand; for transcribers did not venture to move it immediately into the body of the text, though in some MSS. it is *interlined*, but *interlined* with a later hand. After the eighth century, the insertion became general; for Latin MSS. written after that period, have generally, though not always, the passage in the *body* of the text. Further, when the 7th verse made its first appearance in the Latin MSS., it appeared in as many forms as there were forms to the *gloss on the 8th verse*; and though it now *precedes* the 8th verse, it *followed* the 8th verse at its first insertion, as a gloss would naturally follow the text upon which it was made. It is not, therefore, matter of mere conjecture that the 7th verse originated in a Latin gloss upon the 8th verse; it is an historical fact, supported by evidence which cannot be resisted. But many centuries elapsed before the passage was exhibited in Greek. The first Greek writer who has given it is Manuel Calecus, who lived as late as the 14th century. And we need not wonder at finding the passage in his works, as Calecus was a convert to the Church of Rome.

In the fifteenth century, the passage was quoted by Bryennius, who was likewise so attached to the Church of Rome that he quoted *other readings* of the Latin Vulgate which are not found in any Greek MSS. At length, in the sixteenth century, one Greek MS. of the New Testament appeared with 1 John v. 7. Its original appellation was Codex Britannicus, or the British Manuscript; but it is now called the Dublin Manuscript. It made its first appearance in 1520, and that the MS. had just been written when it first appeared is highly probable, because it appeared at a critical juncture, and its appearance answered a particular purpose. The celebrated Erasmus had published two editions of the Greek Testament, one in the year 1516, the other in 1519, both of which were without the passage. This *omission*, as it was called by those who paid more deference to the Latin translation than to the *Greek original*, exposed Erasmus to much censure, though in fact the complaint was for *non-addition*. Erasmus therefore very properly answered, that he had not undertaken to add on his own thinking what he did not find in his Greek copies. He promised, however, that he would insert the passage in his *next edition*, if in the mean time a Greek MS. could be discovered which had the passage. In less than a year after this declaration, Erasmus was informed that there was a Greek MS. in England which contained the passage. At the same time a copy of the passage as contained in that MS. was sent to Erasmus, which, as

he had promised, he inserted in his next edition, A.D. 1522.

Bishop Marsh shews that this single MS., whether written for the occasion or not, could not have been written before the sixteenth century. It has been already observed, that when the passage first appeared in Latin, it appeared under various forms, though it subsequently acquired the permanent form which it now retains in the Latin Vulgate. It appeared also under various forms when first exhibited in Greek. The Dublin MS. gives it in one form. The Greek translation of the *Acta Concilia Lateranensis* again in another form. And the differences are exactly such as might be expected in different Greek translations of the same *Latin* original. Nor had it acquired a settled form when introduced into our printed editions. The Complutensian editors gave it in one form; Erasmus in another form; Robert Stephens, the Parisian printer, in another form.

Such is the origin and progress of that celebrated passage which the Christian world at large for several centuries, and even some men of talent and learning, have taken for the genuine production of John the Apostle. There is no difficulty in accounting for the prevalence of the passage under consideration in the editions of the Greek Testament in common use. The fifth edition of Erasmus was employed by Stephens in his edition. This was slightly modified by the Reformer Beza, and his edition was employed also, with some

variations, by the celebrated printers, the Elzevirs, whose edition, chiefly on account of the beauty of the type, was generally adopted in succeeding editions.

Even since the period when the attention of learned men has been directed to the true scientific principles upon which a text of the Greek Testament must be formed, from the existing MSS., from the ancient versions, and from quotations of the Fathers, the plan generally adopted has been to make the text of the Elzevirs the standard, and to notice in the margin the various readings, accompanied by some marks expressive of the editor's judgment regarding their respective authority. This was done by Mills, a clergyman of the Church of England, by Wetstein, of the Remonstrants in Holland, and by inferior editors.

Here I may discharge a debt of justice and gratitude to one of the greatest benefactors of the Christian Church since the apostles,—I mean the late Professor Griesbach, of Jena, in Saxony, the greater part of whose long life was devoted to the single consideration of the means of ascertaining the purest text of the New-Testament Scriptures, as nearly as possible in the state in which it proceeded from the evangelists and apostles. This eminent person spared no labour, no expense ; he availed himself of all the treasures which the Universities of the Continent could furnish, and visited Britain for the express purpose of examining the MSS. in our Colleges, to render the work of the formation of a new text as com-

plete as possible. After a life thus devoted to the interests of sacred truth, and in a way in which the few only can fully appreciate the difficulty and the full measure of importance, this celebrated person died of a disorder brought on by intense study, in the year 1814.

Now, the edition of Griesbach, which is in the highest esteem with all persons of competent knowledge in sacred literature, does not contain the text of the three heavenly witnesses, 1 John v. 7. It is not too much to assert, that any editor who publishes an edition of the Greek Testament with 1 John v. 7, contained in the text, knowing the result of Professor Griesbach's labours, unless he have examined the evidence for its spuriousness and conscientiously believes it insufficient, *is guilty of adding to the sacred Scriptures*, and that in regard to a passage held to be of the weightiest importance in a controversy between various learned and pious men of two opposite parties, and involving the truth or falsehood of a doctrine held by some to be the corner-stone of Christianity.

#### TABLE OF EVIDENCE FOR THE SPURIOUSNESS OF 1 JOHN v. 7.

1. This passage has not been discovered in any Greek MSS. which can be found to have been written earlier than the sixteenth century. The number of MSS. containing the First Epistle of John, mentioned by name,



and not the whole number, 132 against 1. (This fact is well known from the works in the hands of scriptural critics.) It is of course satisfactory to repair to the fountain-head for information of so precious a nature; and I may therefore be allowed to mention, as corroborating my own conviction, that I availed myself a few years ago of a visit to the University of Oxford, to examine the MSS. of the Greek Testament deposited in the Bodleian Library, the largest and most splendid collection of books in that dignified abode of literature; and I am able to say with perfect confidence that in *not one* of the MSS. which were shewn to me does the text exist, but I know from the testimony of the proper authorities that Oxford has not *one*. I am able also (by the civility and impartiality of the learned members of the Glasgow University) to say, from my own personal examination, that the MSS. which are deposited in the Hunterian Museum, purchased by the late Dr. Hunter, the laborious collector, from the executors of Cæsar de Missy, of Berlin, are also all destitute of the passage under our consideration.

2. One of the oldest Greek MSS. containing the Catholic Epistles in existence, is the Alexandrine, preserved in the British Museum. Of this valuable MS., an accurate and splendid fac-simile was published some years ago; so that in various parts of the world scholars are able to satisfy themselves whether the contested verse be or be not found in it, just as well as if they visited the

British Museum for this purpose. A copy of this work is also in the Hunterian Museum, open to the inspection of students; and I have myself the power of exhibiting a copy of the same to any inquiring student who may be pleased to apply to me for this purpose. It is demonstrable that no trace of the text in question was ever found in this MS., and yet it is assigned by the editor to the fourth century, but by others to the fifth or sixth.

3. The text is not found in any MSS. of the Latin version of the Bible written earlier than the ninth century; e.g. the Charlemagne MS. in the British Museum is of the eighth century.

4. It is not found in any of the MSS. of the other ancient versions, Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Sclavonian, Sahidic, Arabic.

5. It is not cited by any of the Greek Fathers (i.e. the oldest Greek ecclesiastical authors), though to form the doctrine of the Trinity they have cited the words both before and after this text.

6. It is not cited by any of the early Latin Fathers, even when the subjects upon which they treat would naturally have led them to appeal to its authority. There exists in the Hunterian Museum within the University of Glasgow, a MS. in vellum, containing a Latin Commentary on the Epistles of John, by the Venerable Bede, who lived in the latter end of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth century. Bede was, agreeably to the religious creed of the day, a believer in the doctrine of

the Trinity ; yet in his Commentary on the First Epistle of John, he not only does not explain this text, but his observations on the context shew plainly that the text did not exist in the copy of the Scriptures which he used, and therefore in all probability he never heard of it.

7. This text has been *omitted* in several editions of the Greek Testament since the Reformation,—Erasmus, 1st and 2nd editions, recently by Griesbach, Harwood, Scholtz, Lachmann, &c.

8. It was omitted by *Luther* in his German Version. In the old English Bibles of Henry VIII., Edward VI. and Elizabeth, it was printed in small types or included in brackets ; but between the years 1566 and 1576, it began to be printed as it now stands, by whose authority it is not known. Many of the recent theological writers, though avowed Trinitarians, have expressed their belief in its spuriousness, among whom are Marsh, Bishop of Peterborough ; Adam Clarke, the Wesleyan Methodist ; Mr. Charles Butler, the enlightened Catholic writer ; a writer in the *Eclectic Review* for January, 1809 ; Dr. John Pye Smith ; and Dr. Wardlaw, in his controversy with Mr. Yates, derives no argument from this text ; Pretyman, late Bishop of Winchester, whose words are, “ I must own, that after an attentive consideration of the controversy relating to this text, that I am convinced that it is spurious.”

9. The reasoning of Bishop Marsh, employed in page 29, to shew that the single MS., viz. that at Dublin,

which contains 1 John v. 7, could not have been written long before Erasmus inserted the passage in his 3rd edition, has been singularly confirmed by the recent discovery that the MS. is written upon Italian paper of the 16th century!